



July 10, 2012

Dear Community Partner:

As one of our state/community partners, the Virginia Department of Social Services would like to inform you about an exciting tool that will improve access to social services in Virginia:

CommonHelp.

In early fall 2012, the Virginia Department of Social Services will “go live” with CommonHelp, a web-based, self-service platform that will allow citizens access to information about programs and the ability to apply for SNAP (food assistance), TANF (cash assistance), Child Care assistance, Energy/Fuel assistance and Medicaid (medical assistance), 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anyone will be able to reach CommonHelp from the comfort of his or her home or any place where there is a computer with Internet access.

As a community partner, you or your staff often interact with or help individuals who may seek assistance. By referring citizens to the website, answering questions or providing access to computers, you will help to link Virginians with this one-stop, online resource for social services assistance.

The following is provided to help introduce you to CommonHelp.

1. Please look at the resource materials on our “CommonHelp & Our Community Partners” information webpage at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/community/commonhelp/>.

These resources provide introductory information about the new solution, as well as an overview of the screens and customer experience. You will also be able to view the tutorial, “How to Use CommonHelp”, from this webpage. Additional tools are being developed. Please be sure to check the site for future updates.

2. We are pleased to announce that nine webinars or WebEx sessions are scheduled throughout the month of July to provide Community Partners with an introduction and overview of CommonHelp. Using WebEx allows VDSS to reach hundreds of attendees without the cost of travel and other meeting related expenses. Participants can connect using a computer and telephone. Presenters will be able to show slides, provide high quality content, and interact with attendees using live Q&A.

These sessions will give a community partner perspective on how to assist individuals interested in using CommonHelp to screen or apply for VDSS assistance programs. All sessions will last 90 minutes and include time for questions and answers. Dates and times for the sessions are:

Monday, July 16	2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Tuesday, July 17	9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Wednesday, July 18	9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Thursday, July 19	2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Friday, July 20	9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Tuesday, July 24	2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Wednesday, July 25	9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Thursday, July 26	2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Tuesday, July 31	9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Registration in advance is required. Please register online at <https://vdss.webex.com>. Click on the “Upcoming” tab to see a list of the available CommonHelp sessions.

If you and other colleagues will join the meeting as a group (in a congregate room with one phone and one computer), please register under one name. There is no need to register each individual in the room when there are multiple participants.

If your schedule does not permit you to participate in one of the sessions listed above, please note that these sessions will be recorded and made available in the near future at <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/community/commonhelp/>.

For more information on how to participate in a WebEx meeting, please see the “How to Attend” video at <http://www.webex.com/how-to/index.html>.

3. Lastly, VDSS has not posted the CommonHelp URL on our public website. **For now, we ask that partner agencies wait to post the CommonHelp URL on any website or webpage.** We also want to provide your organization with tools and the opportunity to learn more about CommonHelp before the website is widely publicized.

As we move closer to full public access, **we will let you know in advance when to publicize and post the CommonHelp URL or link.**

For more information, please contact us at commonhelp@dss.virginia.gov with any questions.

Thank you for taking the time to read about CommonHelp. We look forward to working with you to ensure that everyone will be able to take advantage of the easy and convenient access that CommonHelp will bring.